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FRENCH HOUSE FURNISHING.

BY THEODORE CHILD.

THE BEDROOM—V. (Continued from page 91.)

After our long peregrinations in the bedroom of the past, it is now time to occupy ourselves with the bedroom of the present day. We have seen the principal forms assumed by the beds, whether Renaissance, Louis XIII., Louis XIV., Louis XV., Louis XVI., Empire or Restoration. As for the ordinary modern bed, it has no artistic merits; the moment a modern maker aims at giving an artistic character to his work he seeks his inspiration, when he does not simply imitate, in the masterpieces of the above epochs. In a French bedroom, whose occupant bestows any care on the objects amid which he lives, we may safely say that the bed will not be of iron—but of wood. Furthermore, the color of the wood, the gaiety or severity of the forms, the style, the nature of the hangings, will depend upon the humor, the situation, the sex, the age and the tastes of each individual.

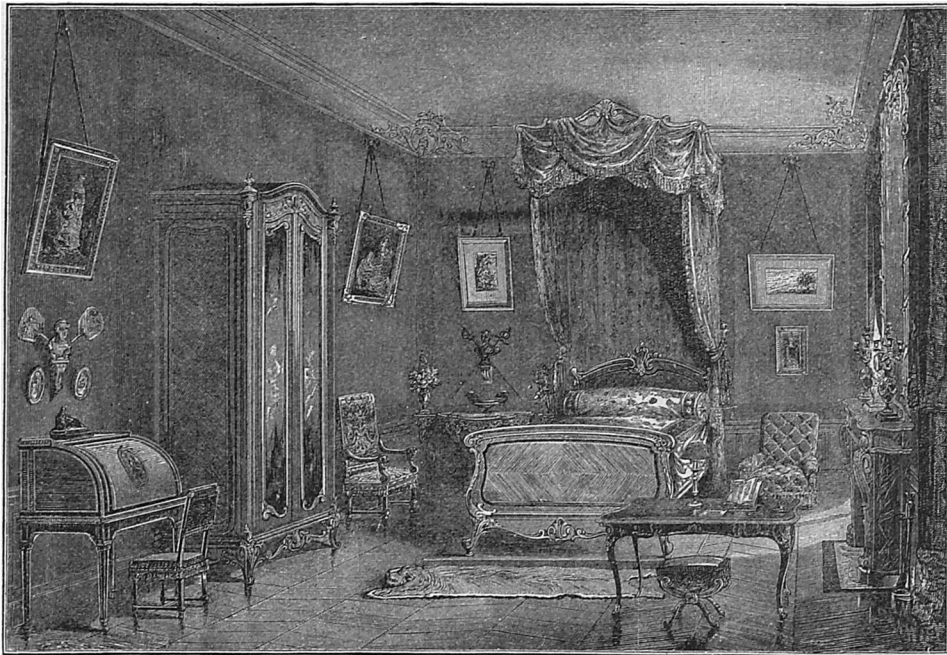
First of all, the wood will be solid and not veneered, and of its natural color, and not stained, and waxed rather than French polished. An exception may be made in favor of white lacquered furniture, which may be admitted in a summer bed-room in a country house, or for the bedroom of a young girl, unless she prefers some light wood, like maple or pine, relieved sometimes by incrustations of colored woods, the gay tones of which will harmonize with light chintz, satinette, or printed silken tissues. But for the chambers of grown up persons, the wood used will be walnut—*noyer*—which lends itself so readily to sculpture; mahogany or rosewood rich enough to dispense with carving; violet wood, etc. Oak is out of the question in a bedroom where a woman is to reign, as also are the styles of the Renaissance or of Louis XIII., which the Parisian *tapisseries* recommended rather to grave diplomatists, lawyers and magistrates, or grave old bachelors; generally the Louis XVI. style will be preferred by married people who do not, as often happens in France, sleep in separate bedrooms, and the same style will also be preferred if the difficulty be resolved by the employment of twin beds placed side by side underneath common hangings and curtains. (See Balzac, *Physiologie du Mariage*. Meditation XVII.)

On this point of hangings the French are firmly fixed. "In spite of their unhealthiness," says Charles Blanc, "bed curtains will never be abandoned by the women, to whom dim light is so dear at the hour when toilets and ornaments do not yet allow them to face full daylight. It must be admitted, too, that a bed without curtains is wanting in grace, and leaves to be desired that soft mystery that adds so much charm and so much price to living beauty." In any case, then we must admit bed-curtains. Those who have the good fortune to live in a house with wainscotted walls will enjoy their spotless purity, or, at the utmost, fill in the panels with tapestry. Those who live in the bare modern houses have a choice of paper and of hangings of all kinds of materials, from velvet and plush down to the simple cotton stuff called *andrinople*. As a rule, the French bedroom will be draped rather than papered. The walls, and even the ceiling, will be covered with stretched chintz or cretonne or silk, and the doors and windows hung with *portieres* and curtains to match. In the matter of stuffs, there is, of course, the very greatest variety, and in the choice of them a man has only to consult his taste and his purse. As for color, here is a very simple hint for a lady who does not wish to choose. Let

her take the flower that best suits her complexion, and on which her thoughts linger with most affection, and let her consult it with care. From the innumerable varieties of the rose to the humble myceloid every flower will be found to display in its calice, its corolla, its pistils and its stamens, side by side with its predominate color, a quantity of *nuances* and shades, amongst which she may safely choose. There are marvels to be worked with tints of rose and yellow, for instance, provided you get the right shades. On choosing the tone of color of their bedroom, the Parisiennes bestow the utmost care, and it is, indeed, a point upon which too much stress cannot be laid. An upholsterer of genius will, of

from the ground." In order to get into such a bed a step-ladder was necessary. In the eighteenth century the bed was generally placed on a platform six inches or a foot high, and, as we have already seen, a little step-ladder of two or three steps formed an article of bedroom furniture. In the provinces these lofty beds are still used, composed of a pile of mattresses, first of straw, then of wool, and often on the top of that a feather bed called in Brittany a *couette*, and then above all a down bed or *edredon*, the latter being a modern invention now accepted everywhere.

In Paris, and in the parts of France accessible to progress, the old straw *paillasse* have been replaced by the spring mattress, consisting of rows of wire springs about a foot high, fixed on a wooden framework, and covered over with strong ticking. (On the top of this spring mattress, or *sommier elastique*, is placed a thick mattress of wool or of hair, or more commonly of wool and hair combined. Very often the number of mattresses is increased to two, or even three, and these mattresses vary in thickness from seven to ten inches. These, together with the blankets, sheets and quilts, the mere thickness of bedding may easily amount to over three feet. The French housewife takes a pride in the quantity and quality of her bedding, and the thicker and more solid her mattresses are the happier she feels. The squareness of the bed is, of course, due to the trim shape of the mattresses, and to the neatness with which they are placed one on the other. When the bed is made up for the day none of the clothes are visible, the whole being enveloped in an immense *couvre-lit* carefully smoothed and



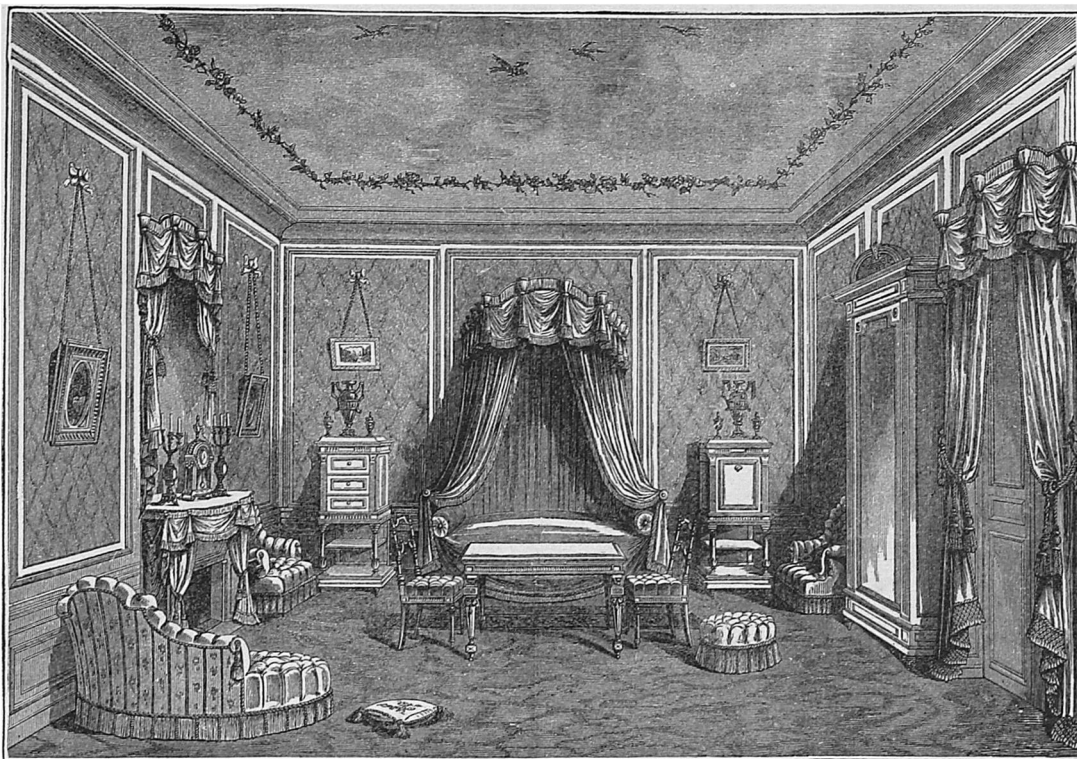
BEDROOM IN MODERN FRENCH STYLE.

course, study the physique of the person for whom he is working, but then all upholsterers are not upholsterers of genius, and then it is to be hoped that all women put something of their own personal taste in the arrangement of their surroundings.

Whatever be the nature of the stuff chosen to cover the walls of the French bedroom, it will be either applied flatly or in panels, or with flutings, which naturally take the dust readily. The stuff on the ceiling is very generally applied in flutings forming a star radiating from a central knot. For panels, if you are furnishing in the Louis XV. or XVI. style, there is nothing equal in charm to old Aubusson tapestry on a creamy white ground, me-

tucked in so as to mold the form of the bed without a single crease. From a sense of symmetry, the French housewife will have apparently a bolster at the head and at the foot of the bed. Sometimes a false bolster is put at the foot and removed at night, when the chamber-maid turns the sheets, takes off the *couvre-lit*, and prepares the bed for the night; generally, however, the semblance of a bolster at the foot of the bed is formed by rolling up the two pillows. The edges of the mattresses are often bound with silk or satinette, or with some other material destined to conceal the ugliness or coarseness of the ticking; the blankets are likewise generally bordered with rose or blue silk, and in the trimming of the sheets and pillow-case the French housewife does not neglect the charm of lace and ribbons. In the matter of quilts, counterpanes and bed-covers, the French display as much taste as any nation.

The day cover of the bed especially lends itself to the richest ornamentation, and in its fabrication the richest stuffs may be used. An indication of this richness is given in the accompanying view of a modern French bedroom. The quilts, counterpanes, etc., are often of silk or satin, padded, *capitonné* and embroidered in great variety. Often the whole framework, the whole bedstead, will be padded, quilted, buttoned down or *capitonné*. But all these multifarious styles of bedsteads, bed hangings and fixings cannot be mentioned in detail. Mere words, too, can only give a very imperfect idea of the folds of stuff, and rather than attempt an impossible task, I will ask the reader to examine the French



BED ROOM IN LOUIS XVI. STYLE.

dallions with figures surmounted by garlands and trophies, and with, suspended underneath, baskets of flowers, holyhocks and poppies, especially if you have the arm-chairs upholstered in tapestry to match. The partisans of hygienic bedrooms may, however, with reason, protest against the use of old tapestry either for hangings or for chairs.

The composition of the French bed is slightly different from that of our own. In the first place it is generally much higher. Gibbon, describing his journey to Lausanne in the last century, mentions at Langres "an excellent bed about six feet high

models that will be illustrated in future numbers of this journal.

Very often the Parisiennes have a tendency to overdo the drapery of their bedrooms. A famous singer, a brunette, has a bedroom, in the draping of which she has employed all shades of red, peony, cardinal, geranium, Titian red, blood-red, etc. The walls are hung with flowered lampas, draped with crimson plush with golden reflections. The chimney-piece, the glass, the doors, the windows, are hung in the same audacious style. The ceiling is covered flatly with cream satin, in the centre of

which is a large panel of red velvet embroidered with gold and silver flowers; the outer edge of the ceiling is bordered with old embroidery. In the centre of the room is a monumental bed, with heavy, red drapery, and a cover of white satin embroidered with gold lace. At the foot of the bed is a white bearskin; at the side a *chaise longue* or couch, and a profusion of screens, ottomans, tables, whatnots and cushions.

Another luxurious bedroom that I have seen is in better taste. The bed placed in the middle is covered with black silk and surmounted by a baldachino adorned with birds and flowers in high relief. The counterpane is of red satin embroidered with arabesques of gold, silver, and many-colored silk. Along one wall is a divan of red plush, embroidered with a Hungarian point, and four ottoman chairs in green velvet; on the chimney-piece a glass bordered with cream satin; portières and hangings of green satin. The luxury of both these bedrooms is perhaps rather meretricious. But what will you? Acrippa d'Aubigné, in his *Divorce Satirique*, tells us that Queen Marguerite, of Navarre, slept in sheets of black satin, a fancy in which other great French dames have indulged since.

As regards the general furniture of the French bedroom, its choice is governed by the principle of eclecticism. Chairs, tables, consoles, secretaries, cupboards, coffers, night-tables, chests of drawers, screens, *prie-dieu* or praying chairs, couches—not sofas, the sofa with a back must be banished from the bedroom—whatnots, brackets, pictures, etc., will all be chosen by the individual taste of the occupant, guided by the desire of making a harmonious whole in point of general style and color, and, above all, by the desire to make the room a place of repose, privacy and habitual comfort. For that reason let each piece of furniture be chosen with a view to comfort, and with a view to individual comfort. Have half-a-dozen chairs in the room if you please, but let each chair be different in shape and seating quality. In the French bedroom, as a rule, you will find nothing to match—no suites, no sets.

Thus far it would seem that the modern French bedroom contains nothing essential which we do not find in the bedrooms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yes, there is one piece of furniture, the *armoire à glace*, or wardrobe, which is peculiarly modern, and which, thanks to its utility, has won rights of citizenship in every French bedroom. The English wardrobe is generally constructed in three parts—that is to say, a centre cupboard with two wings. The French wardrobe rarely has wings. It is an upright cupboard with flat facades, and either folding doors or a single plate glass door. Practically the *armoire à glace* has few merits, but some of the modern models are nevertheless agreeable enough to the eye, as, for instance, the one figured in the cut with its elegantly chiselled bronze ornaments. I have intentionally avoided mentioning toilette articles as being incompatible with the decoration, ornamentation and proper keeping of the bedroom. All this apparatus in an orderly and elegant dwelling, will be banished to the dressing and bath-rooms. At the utmost, in a lady's bedroom, we will admit the dry toilet table of which the favorite form, now, as in the eighteenth century, is the draped Duchesse and Louis XV. toilet, hung with muslin, satinette, satin, silk or taffetas, and tricked out with ribbons, according to the caprice and taste of the user. Models of these draped toilet tables are given in the accompanying cuts. During the daytime, too, the night table will be banished to the dressing room, and only placed at night at the bedside, with candlesticks, matches and the inevitable *cerre d'eau* on it, as it is called in French, consisting, not as the name would seem to indicate, of a simple glass of water, but of a little waiter or salver, with a decanter of water, a glass, a spoon, a sugar basin, and a little phial of orange flower water. These little accessories may be very elegant specimens of glass-ware or of silver and glass-ware combined.

At the head of the bed against the back drapery the French generally hang a crucifix or some pious souvenir, a portrait of father or mother or wife, a holy water vessel, or something that speaks to the soul and not to the senses; and invariably over the pillow will be pinned a bunch of boxwood brought home from church on Palm Sunday, and placed there to drive away the evil spirits. Often in beds of the Renaissance style, whose lines naturally tend to architectural forms, with cornices, friezes, pedes-

of one tone, generally red. The windows will be arranged like the windows of the other rooms of the house of which we shall have something to say in a future article. The same remark applies to the fire-place, the chimney-piece and the wall-mirrors.

On the whole, the French bedroom, even the bedroom of modest pretensions, is more comfortable, more warm and cosy, more a living room than the Anglo-Saxon bedroom. It has none of that coldness, that austerity, I had almost said prudery, of the English bedroom—a room in which people never think of lingering beyond the time necessary for undressing, sleeping and dressing again. In the French bedroom its occupant willingly lingers, the women especially, and thanks to the traditions of the eighteenth century, its furniture and accessories have remained the subject of a certain coquetry. Furthermore, in the matter of luxury, French bedrooms very commonly attain a degree of elegance, richness and costliness of decoration that is rarely seen in English countries. The lavish use of rich draperies alone makes an immense difference, and in fitting bedrooms the French *tapissiers* really display wonderful talent, especially in the crumpling and folding and trimming of plush and satin and lampas. In the skilful and artistic handling of drapery the Parisian *tapissiers* are as superior as the Parisian milliners and dressmakers; they beat the world. It must be remembered, however, that the

tapissiers are seconded by the women just as the dressmakers are. An elegant Parisienne is as particular about her bedroom as she is about her dress, and she wishes to have her surroundings as much her own and as thoroughly individual as her costumes, and, therefore, she would no more think of ordering "a bedroom suite" in such and such a style, so many articles according to catalogue, than she would of ordering a bonnet like Mme. X's. She will think the thing over, study it out, talk it out with the *tapissier*, and, in the end, have a bedroom that is really her domain, her sanctuary, her temple, and not a copy of Mme. Z's temple or Mme. V's temple. In interior decoration, especially in the decoration of rooms that are not intended for formal and ceremonial receptions, it is not only legitimate but also desirable that the occupant's personality should be impressed upon the details and upon the general arrangement. Individual fancy and individual taste may, in this case, be indulged in to the fullest extent within the limits of the laws of taste and the principles of esthetics, which are, in fact, little more than the principles of appropriateness and the laws of common sense.

INDIAN WORK.

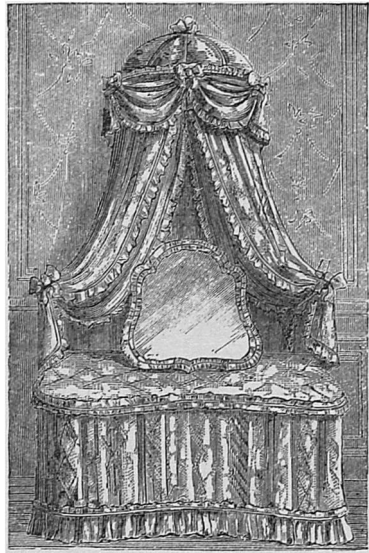
The lacquered and papier mâché articles of Indian work, with which we are all familiar, have each a character and individuality of its own.

The Sindh boxes are made by laying variously colored lac in succession on the boxes, while turning on the lathe, and then cutting the design through the different colors.

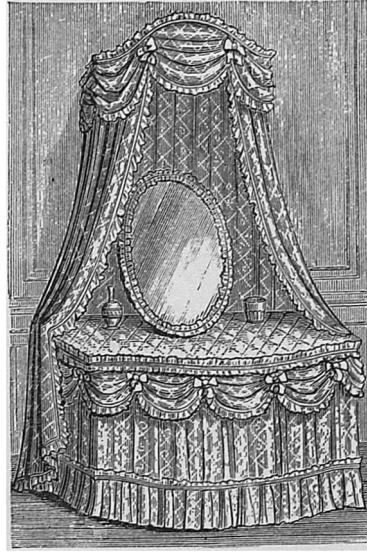
The Punjab boxes are distinguished by the purple-colored lac used on them.

The Rajputana boxes have generally a drab colored ground, decorated with conventional flower forms of two colors, or two forms arranged in the alternate rhythmical manner seen in all Indian decoration. The lacquered papier mâché work of Cashmere is the choicest in India, and inferior only to the very best Persian. It is chiefly used for native pen cases and boxes, which are painted all over, either with the shawl pattern in many colors (a most unpleasant

style of decoration for large articles, such as tables and chairs) or with the common flower forms of the Cashmere valleys, the rose, narcissus, pink and jasmine, painted in their natural colors, but without light and shade. In the north-western provinces, Bareilly is celebrated for its black lacquered and gilt furniture. Karnul lacquer work on trays and boxes is embossed with flowers, painted on a green ground and lighted up with gold.

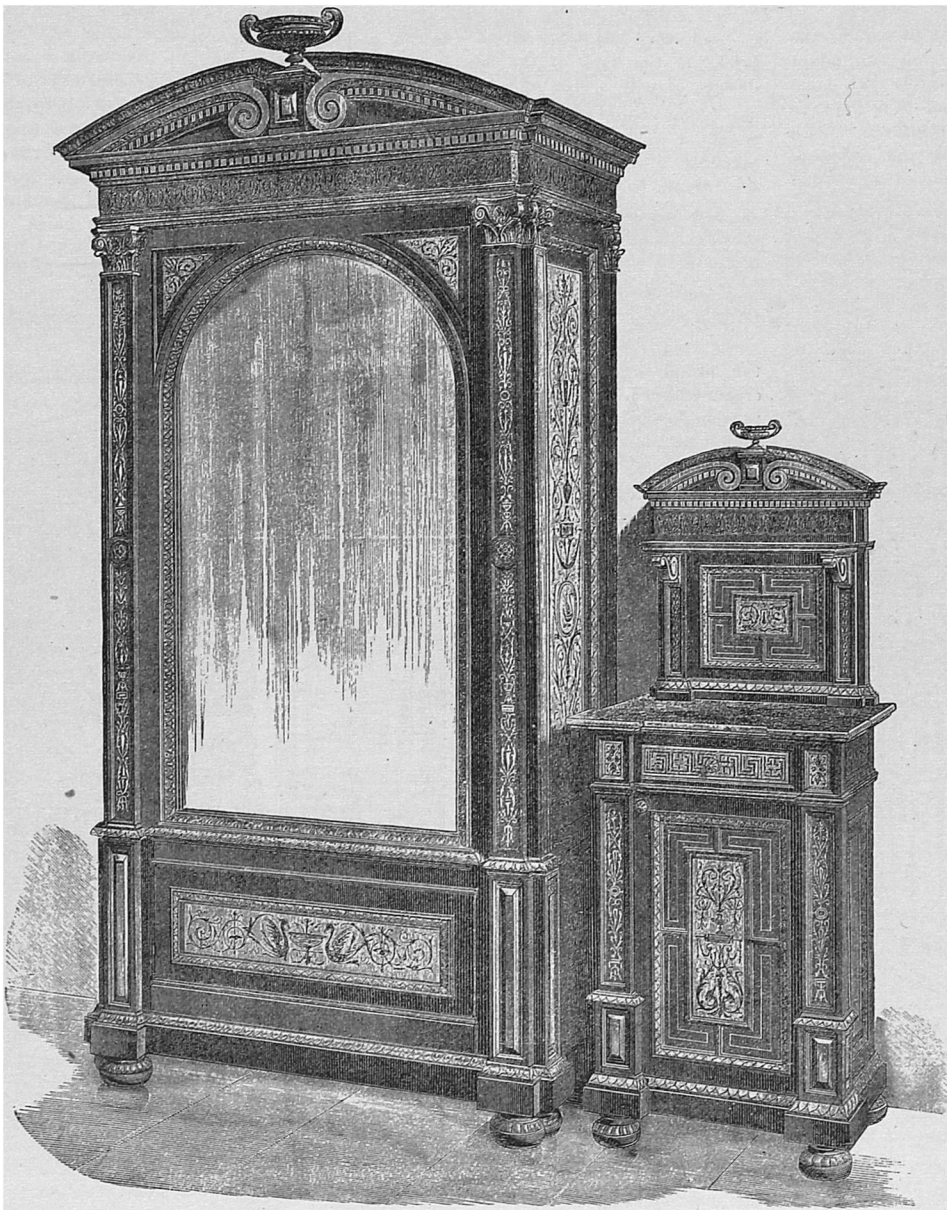


DUCHESS TOILET.



LOUIS XV. TOILET.

tals and frontons, a niche will be found in the centre of the back-board for the reception of an image of the Virgin or of a patron saint. But whatever the upholsterer may tell you, do not hang up a looking-glass at the head of the bed on the pretext that it is French. It is true this is sometimes done in France, but it is an example not to be imitated; if other reasons were wanting the fact that it is in bad taste would suffice to condemn the looking-glass in such a place.



ARMOIRE AND NIGHT TABLE.

As regards the carpets, the French floors being generally waxed and polished, the bedrooms, like all the other rooms, are rarely carpeted all over, and in this respect they are more hygienic than our carpeted Anglo-Saxon rooms. At the side of the bed will be found skins or rugs called *descentes de lits* and other rugs here and there according to the size of the room. If, on the other hand the room be carpeted all over, the carpet will be